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From *Acadien* to *Cajun* to *Cadien*: Ethnic Labelization and Construction of Identity

JACQUES HENRY

OBSERVATION OF everyday life in Southwest Louisiana clearly attests to the existence of a French-based ethnic phenomenon: French is spoken, Cajun identity is claimed on signs and in publications, in-group solidarity is practiced in kin groups and organizations, Cajun music is played, ethnic food is cooked and sold, and Cajun country is toured by visitors. Yet, the answer to the question “What is a Cajun?” remains elusive. Operational and anecdotal definitions abound from individual Cajuns, scholars, legislators and writers of all kinds, from poets to humorists; yet this profusion is of little help in providing a clear consensus. On the one hand, views of Cajun ethnicity by Cajuns vary according to situational and referential contexts;¹ on the other hand, definitions have been attempted from different theoretical perspectives by historians, geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, and folklorists with goals as diverse as providing an official definition, delineating a territory, finding informants or analyzing Cajun ethnic identity. All definitions focus on or refer to Acadian ancestry, French language, ecological and cultural adaptation to Southwestern Louisiana, Catholicism, agriculturalism, and a particular folk culture as the main variables of Cajun ethnicity. Yet, these efforts are deemed wanting because of inadequacies inherent to the approach,² the fast-evolving, multi-dimensional and sometimes paradoxical nature of the phenomenon at hand³ or the larger theoretical difficulties in tackling the issue of ethnicity per se.⁴

This article attempts another approach. It consists of an analysis of the written occurrences of the labels used to describe the descendants of the Acadian exiles in Louisiana, and especially the English-French pair *Cajun/cadien*.⁵ The ethno-historical exploration of the label’s creation, use, and meaning reveal the dialectical process at play in the construction of Cajun ethnicity. This analysis confirms the early realization of *cadien* in Louisiana Acadian speech and the coining of *Cajun* by outsiders who popularized the word in the late nineteenth century; it presents

the variations in patterns of utilization of *Cajun/cadien* from its emergence as a derogative term used by outsiders to its current positive but divergent realizations in English and French. The analysis of the evolution through changing social contexts and from in-group and out-group perspectives shows that the use and meaning of *Cajun/cadien* closely espouses social and cultural changes. Stable symbol of a changing culture or constant marker of shifting ethnic boundaries, *Cajun/cadien* appears through historical evolution as a reliable indicator of the ongoing construction of Cajun ethnicity.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data consist of written occurrences of *Cajun/cadien*, a derivative of *acadien* [akadiẽ] which refers to the people and culture of Acadie, a region on the Canadian Atlantic coast. *Cajun/cadien* is now used to designate the group, language and culture of people assumed to descend from the Acadian exiles who settled in Louisiana after their deportation from Canada in 1755. A key word here is "assumed" because the definition of *Cajun/cadien* is still a knot of confusion despite a long presence in Louisiana and a surge of commercial and scholarly interest in the past two decades. One issue is unanimously agreed upon: there would have been and there would be no Cajuns if Acadians had not settled in Louisiana between 1765 and 1785. The rest is a matter of debate.

Cajun is the written form of the American English pronunciation of [kədʒʌn]; [kədʒʌn] used universally by Cajuns and non-Cajuns as well as by English and French speakers. In conformity with English morphology, it is the only form of the adjective and the singular noun, and it is both masculine and feminine.

Cadien and *cadjin* are the written forms of the Louisiana French pronunciation of [kadʒẽ]. [kadʒẽ] used exclusively by French speakers, mostly by Cajuns but also by non-Cajuns. The feminine form of both terms is respectively *cadienne* [kadiẽ] and *cadjine* [kadzin]. The plural of both the noun and adjective, masculine and feminine, is marked with the *s* ending, which is not realized in speech.

The original oral realization of the term will remain shrouded by the eternal silence of its long-gone unrecorded speakers. Modern oral usage ranges from [ka:dʒẽ] to [kadiẽ] in French and [kədʒʌn] in English. The historical evolution can, however, be reconstructed from written sources that provide diachronic and codified information.

The data presented here does not claim to be exhaustive, especially

for the early and rare occurrences of the words and the current massive use. Compilations of manuscripts (administrative documents, personal correspondence) were the source of some eighteenth-century occurrences.⁶ Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century material come from published accounts of contacts with the Louisiana Acadian population and territory; these descriptions have been collated and analyzed in several bibliographical essays.⁷ These reports originate from administrators, scholars, travelers, journalists, and fiction writers, and are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Modern material has been collected through observation-participation in books, articles, dictionaries, administrative documents, signs, and lately, in electronic form. Table 3 presents the use of ethnic code words in telephone directories of the Lafayette area (1905–1995).

There are methodological questions pertinent to the ethnohistory of a written ethnic label. The evolution, use and meaning of a name are worthy topics of inquiry. Anthropologists and sociolinguists have studied ethnic labels to identify and delimit ethnic groups;⁸ as for the ethnic situation in Louisiana, the much-confusing label *Creole/créole* has been the subject of several studies,⁹ but *Cajun/cadien* has not received the same amount of scrutiny.

Another issue deals with the use of written data. In Louisiana, writings in French and Creole have long been provided as a measurement of the cultural vitality of Louisiana French and Creole cultures: their disappearance signaled the demise of French among elites, and the literary renaissance of the 1970s is hailed as a manifestation of the resurgence of Cajun ethnicity.¹⁰ The analysis of the written symbols, along with the first-hand information provided by writers, open a unique access to social facts and processes.

It is acknowledged that both *Cajun* and *cadien* were spoken before they were recorded on paper and that their use was wider than the limited view of their existence allowed by a handful of texts. The questions pertaining to the correspondence between oral realization and graphic representation will be addressed; in fact, they are at the core of this “ethnography of writing.”

Finally, the validity of the written portrayal of a largely illiterate group by erudite outsiders must be assessed. Accounts of the use of *Cajun/cadien* originate from non-Acadian sources and are by and large noticeably pejorative. In contrast, Cajun authors’ publications, especially in French, are recent, rare and reflective of a renewed ethnic pride. Since the task at hand is the analysis of an ethnic label, not the description of Cajun history and culture, the patterns of name usage by insiders

and outsiders are significant and can be interpreted through the distortion of biases and stereotypes. Ethnic label use is positioned on the boundary that separates the Ethnic from the Others; its historical-ethnographic study allows for the integration of the etic and emic perspectives in a multicultural and biracial setting, in diachrony and synchrony.

THE CREATION OF THE TERM

The etymology of *Cajun/cadien* is undisputed; there are Cajuns in Louisiana because Acadians settled there after their deportation from Acadie by the British in 1755. The etymology of *Acadie* is not as clear. Historians award the coining of the term to Giovanni Verrazano; in 1524, the Florentine navigator called the upper part of the American Atlantic Coast *Archadia* "for the beauty of its trees" in reference to Arcadia, a rural region of ancient Greece regarded as a pastoral paradise. Between 1548 and 1575, maps named the area corresponding to Nova Scotia *Larcadia*, *Larcadie* or *Arcadia*. Samuel de Champlain, the founder of French Canada, used both *Arcadie* (1603) and *Accadie* (1613). In 1603, the French king Henri IV opened the region of *la Cadie* to settlers. A group of French merchants incorporated a "*Compagnie de l'Acadie*" in 1604, providing the first written record of the term.¹¹

A second interpretation proposes a different source. Poirier submitted that "*Cadie* is the primitive name of the territory taken from the natives." It would originate from terms used by the Algonquin tribes who resided along the North Atlantic coast; *Acadie* would be a variation of the Micmac *algatig*, a camp, as found today in *Tracadie*, *Subenacadie*, or the Malecite term *quoddy*, a fertile place, as found in Passamaquoddy, Chappaquiddick.¹²

The scarcity of written records, the early variations in spelling and the lack of recorded seventeenth-century speech hamper any definite conclusion on the origin of the term and its early oral realization and use. Nevertheless, throughout the eighteenth century, *Acadian/acadien* unequivocally designated the Catholic descendants of French farmers and fishermen settled around the Baie Francaise. Descendants of English and Scottish settlers who arrived after France ceded Acadie to England in 1713 were not labeled Acadians.

The *grand dérangement* (the great displacement) which followed the deportation resulted in the settlement of approximately 5,000 Acadians in Louisiana. The refugees were labeled *Acadians/acadiens*. In May of 1765, Charles Aubry, military commander of New Orleans, noted:

Lorsque j'ai rendu compte de l'arrivée d'une soixantaine de familles acadiennes venues de Saint Domingue, je ne croyais pas qu'elles seraient suivies de beaucoup d'autres qui arrivent continuellement et que la Louisiane allait bientôt devenir une nouvelle Acadie.

*When I reported the arrival of sixty Acadian families from Saint Domingue, I did not think they would be followed by many others who are arriving continuously and that Louisiana was soon to become a new Acadia.*¹³

Their descendants were long referred to as *Acadians/acadiens*; so indicate official correspondence and authors (see Tables 1 and 2). There is, however, scant evidence that the abbreviated term was in use, and available data suggest an early origination in French. In a 1771 letter, a priest in Louisiana complained that

Il y a pres d'un mois que vers les onze heures du matain quatre Cadiens entrèrent ches moy scavoir les nommees Richard pere, Poyri, Bergeron, dit Andre, sous pretexte d'allumer leur pype.

*About a month ago at around eleven in the morning four Cajuns, the elder Richard, Poyrie, Bergeron said Andre, came to my house under the pretext to light their pipe.*¹⁴

Not much can be deduced from this unique occurrence; the writer was not an Acadian, and although the tone of the letter conveys a dislike of the behavior of said *Cadiens*, it cannot be concluded that the abbreviated term was universally used as a derogative. Historians have also recorded the use of this abbreviated form; it mostly applied to Acadian settlements in Québec; Poirier claimed that Acadians called themselves *Cadgiens* or more simply French.¹⁵ It can be assumed that a derivative of *Acadien* was used in speech; it is unclear, however, how it was used by Acadians or outsiders and what meaning it carried.

More than a century would elapse before *cadien* appeared in print in Louisiana. It was used in 1888 by novelist Sidonie de la Houssaye in her novel *Pouponne et Balthazar*. Creole scholar Alcée Fortier had a correspondent use it too in an 1894 publication.¹⁶ *Cadien* is the only early French derivative of *Acadien*; later other abbreviations have been proposed: *Cayens*, *cajin*, *Cadgiens*, *Cajen*, *Cadjun*, *Cadjein*, *Cadjien*, and *cadjin*.¹⁷

Most sources agree to award the coining of *Cajun* to Putnam's *Maga-*

TABLE 1
French Name Used for Descendants of Acadian Exiles
(Eighteenth & Nineteenth Centuries)

	No Mention	Creole	Acadien	Cadien
Aubry (1765) in Arcenault (1965)			X	
Conseil Supérieur (1768) in Historical Records (1940)			acadien	
Valentin (1771) in Archivo General de Indias				X
Champigny (1773)			X	
Bossu (1777)	X			
Favrot (1779) in Historical Survey (1941)			X	
Raynal (1780)			X	
Baudry des Lauzières (1802)	X			
Berquin Duvalon (1802)		X		
Perrin du Lac (1805)			X	
Robin (1807)			X	
Chateaubriand (1827) in (1929)	X			
Tixier (1844)*			X	
Barde (1861)		X	X	
Delahoussaye (1888)			X	X
Sauvalle (1891)	X			
Fortier (1894:190–6)			X	X
Anonyme (1901) in Ditchy (1932)			X	X
Voorhies (1907)			X	

Note: * The author used term once in “Quand nous arrivâmes aux Acadiens...” (p.28) referring to the Acadian Coast on the Mississippi. Victor Tixier, *Voyage aux Prairies Osages Louisiane et Missouri, 1839–40* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1866).

zine contributor R.L. Daniels in 1879.¹⁸ It was one of many variations writers gave to *Acadian*. In 1873, a planter wrote of *Cagians*; *Cajen* is recorded in 1873, *Cadian* in 1876.¹⁹ Even though *Cajun* would become the standard English spelling, other forms were later proposed by writers: *Cajan*, *'Cadian*, *Cajian* and *Cajin*;²⁰ *Kajun* is also currently used by local businesses.

In addition to the parallel variations of both French and English spellings, other clues point to an origination of the abbreviated term in Louisiana Acadian speech. Authors indicated that they were transcribing a term used in speech; Daniels wrote: “Acadian—or rather its corruption ‘Cajun’ as they pronounce it;”²¹ “Presently we saw our first Acadians—nowhere spoken of in their own country otherwise than as ‘Cajuns,’” noted Ralph.²² De la Houssaye wrote:

TABLE 2
English Names Used for Descendants of Acadian Exiles
(Eighteenth & Nineteenth Centuries)

Authors	No Name	French	Creole	Acadian	Cajun
Gordon (1766) in Mereness (1912:482)				X	
Pittman (1770:24)				Acadians	
Hutchins (1784:41,47)				X	
Pitot (1802) in 1979				X	
Stoddard (1812:177–85, 319–30)		X	X		
Brackenridge (1814)	X				
Cramer (1814:130)				X	
Darby (1816:146, 190)		X	X	X	
Cathcart (1819) in Prentiss (1855:95–7)		X			
Flint (1826:329–38, 1835:15)		X			
Prentiss (1829) in Prentiss (1855:95–7)		X			
Sealsfield (1842) in McMillan (1943:119)				Acajan	
Longfellow (1847)				X	
Lyell (1849:93–4, 104)		X	X		
Olmstead (1856:342)		X	X	X	
Dorr (1860) in Prichard (1938)				X	
Dennett (1865) in (1965:324)	X				
Waud (1866:670)				X	
Noyes (1868:54)			X	X	Cagians
Lockett (1873:51)				X	
Rhodes (1873:254)			X	X	Cajens
De Leon (1875:361)				X	
King (1875:85)				X	
Nordhoff (1876:73)				X	Cadians
Daniels (1879)		Créoles français	X	X	X
Sparks (1882:372–89)				X	
Cable (1884) in (1886:308)				X	Cadians
Davis (1887:917–8)				X	Cajans
Warner (1887:335, 350, 353)				X	
Cable (1888) in (1901:74, 260–1)				X	X
Harris in Poole (1889:26)				X	X
Perrin (1891:103–4)				X	Cajan
Ralph (1893:874, 883)				X	X
Chopin (1969 [1894–1990]					'Cadian
(1894) in (1969:320–1)					X

... ils nommèrent ce coin de terre qu'ils venaient d'adopter la Petite Cadie, du nom de la patrie perdue ... "Maître," répondit l'esclave, "c'est une des Cadiennes du campement."

*They named the piece of land they had just adopted the small Cadie, the name of the lost motherland ... "Master," the slave said; "it's one of the Cadiennes from the camp."*²³

In addition, whether in English or French, authors resorted to different typographical devices to transcribe the word; Noyes used italics, others resorted to quotation marks;²⁴ an anonymous 1901 glossary indicated the proper French pronunciation in "cadien (pron. Cadjen)."²⁵

Furthermore an analysis of the spelling reveals that the dropping of the initial *a* is unanimously noted in both French and English. This consensus supports the assumption that the spelling correctly represented the abbreviated pronunciation of *Acadian/acadien*. However, the continued use of *Acadian/acadien* and the recent creation of *Acadiana* indicate that the apharesis (suppression of an initial sound) is not uniquely the result of internal linguistic pressure; there were non-linguistic factors at play in the coining and the writing of *Cajun/cadien*. The introduction of the letters *j* or *g* accurately symbolizes the oft-noted shift in both Acadian and Cajun French from [d] to [dʒ] when followed by an open vowel [i]. Such a shift is found in *Dieu* [dieu] pronounced [dʒoe], *diable* [diabl] pronounced [dʒab]. French spelling has no codified symbol to represent the sound [dʒ] which is not a French consonant; French writers used two methods to indicate the shift: the use of *j* or *g* in conjunction with the letter *d* as in *cadjin*, *cadgein*, and an indication on how to pronounce *cadien*. The maintenance of the conventional orthography is most likely due to the etymological pressure of *Acadian/acadien*.

It is easier to represent the phonetic shift in Acadian French with English spelling: [ʒ] is an English consonant represented by the symbols *j* and *g*; English writers uniformly used *j* or *g* to coin *Cajun*, *Cajan*, *Cajen*, *Cajin*, *Cagians*. So did some Canadian Acadians: letters by an Acadian housewife in the 1890s give *acajin* and *canajin*.²⁶ The various endings *-ian*, *-an*, *-un*, *-en*, *-in* used by English writers reflect the difficulty to represent the sound [ɛ̃] which does not exist in English. It is frequent in French and was originally noted with the *-ien* ending; later, endings in *-in*, *-en* and *-ein* were introduced.

In conclusion, evidence shows that the abbreviated form of *Acadian/acadien* was used in Louisiana Acadian speech and that outsiders coined written forms in both French and English approximately one century after the arrival of Acadian exiles. The coining of *Cajun/cadien* thus appears to be larger than a mere linguistic event such as a phonetic transcription; its significance lies in the interaction between social groups in nineteenth-century Louisiana. It is to be sought in the use and meaning of the term.

EARLY USAGE AND NEGATIVE ASCRIPTION

Tables 1 and 2 map the use of names in French and English accounts from the eighteenth and nineteenth century to designate the descendants of Acadian exiles in Louisiana. Table 1 shows that Acadians were not a topic of great interest for French writers; Bossu, Baudry des Lauzieres, Chateaubriand and Sauvalle do not mention the Acadians despite traveling in the area and showing keen interest in describing the natural environment and local population, especially the *sauvages*, as Native Americans were called.²⁷ When Acadians are mentioned, mostly by Louisiana-based writers, they are referred to as *acadien* and in a couple of instances as *créole*; never are the Acadians labeled *français*, a term reserved for French citizens or for those claiming direct French ascendance. Then, toward the end of the century, limited use of the abbreviated term is made or recorded by outsiders; in these instances, *cadien* is clearly used as a derogative or a term indicating rurality, lack of education and low social status.

Table 2 shows a greater interest of Anglo-American writers in the Acadians. Name usage also reveals significant differences in the perspective adopted by these writers. In colonial Louisiana, authors only used *Acadians*. Then, after the Louisiana Purchase and until the 1880s, Acadians were referred to as *Acadians*, *Creoles* and *French*. It is sometimes unclear if the authors wrote about Acadians, French Canadians, French-born or native Creoles. For instance, Stoddard's account of the "character of the Louisianians" did not mention *Acadians* but *French*, *Creoles*, *Creole French* or *French Creoles*; it differentiated between "Creoles of Upper-Louisiana" and "those along Red River and the Delta," and those Creoles who are "partly the descendants of French Canadians, and partly of those who migrated under some of the first governors of Louisiana"; mentions of settlements on the western side of the Mississippi, of "mixing" with "Spaniards, German and other strangers" as well as with the Aborigenes, and of "peculiar customs wholly derived from their Canadian ancestors" suggest that the Acadians may have been included in the description.²⁸ Similarly, memoirs by Flint and Prentiss contain no references of *Acadians* even if their mentions of the *French* are likely to include the Acadians. Nevertheless, in these early accounts, the Acadians did not appear as a discrete group.²⁹

The use of *French* to refer to the Acadians was unique to the Anglo-American perspective and, as shown, could be problematic. There was more confusion over the use of *Creole*. This confusion was due to

the term's polysemy and the inconsistent use that writers made of it. The various meanings of *Creole* in Louisiana result from historical evolution and the absence of clear-cut boundaries between the various groups it labeled; from the original sense of "native to the colonies," the meaning was later expanded to refer to cultural differences (Creole versus American) and racial distinctions (black, white or both); furthermore, the term had both ethnic and linguistic dimensions that did—and still do—not coincide: for instance, a Creole does not necessarily speak Creole.³⁰ Predictably, its use varied greatly according to the social location of users. Anglo-American writers systematically used *Creole* in combination with other labels; the overlap is apparent in this notation by Frederick L. Olmsted: "We were passing a hamlet of cottages, occupied by the Acadians, or what the planters call *habitans*, poor white French Creoles."³¹

Then, by the end of the nineteenth century, writers no longer associated the Acadians with *Creole*; the literary accounts of Louisiana Creole society by George W. Cable make the distinction quite clear: for him, Creoles were the white elite of European descent.³² Since Acadians were not perceived as belonging to the ruling class, English names used to characterize them were limited to *Acadian* and its abbreviated forms. In parallel with the evolution in French, the Acadians, no longer *French* or *Creoles*, were exclusively labeled *Acadians* or *Cajuns*.

However, both terms were by no means synonyms; the distinctiveness of *Cajun/cadien* is clearly marked semantically; it is presented as a corrupted term to be used with precaution because it is an insult:

The name Acadians, by which they were first known, was soon contracted or corrupted into the term "Cajan," by which they are frequently known. For some reason unknown to us, these people object to the name Cajan. There is certainly no disgrace in being a descendant of an innocent people who were driven from their homes in Acadia and settled in this country; and we can see no reason for being ashamed of the name or its contracted form, Cajan.³³ Nearly all the white folks who trudged along the highways were Acadians, all but hallowed by the magic of Longfellow, and it was strange indeed to hear that we not call them Cajuns to their faces lest they be offended, that the term is taken as one of reproach.³⁴

The same meaning was ascribed to the French derivative; this 1901 definition is assumed to have been written by an Acadian scholar:

CADIEN [...] Ce nom est quelquefois donné dans le sens d'ironie mais le plus souvent de mépris. Il ne semble pas du tout l'abrégé de *Acadien*; car on l'applique indistinctement à tout créole, quelle que soit son origine, qui sent la campagne et qui a l'air d'un paysan. C'est un Cadien!

CAJUN [...] This name is sometimes used ironically but most often conveys disdain. It does not at all appear to be the abbreviated form of *Acadian*; it is applied indiscriminately to any Creole who, whatever its origin, smells like the country and looks like a peasant. That's a Cajun!³⁵

No longer *French* or *Creole*, *Cajuns/cadiens* are not either necessarily *Acadians/acadiens*. Separated from their Frenchness, denied the Creole label, Cajuns were being pulled away from their Acadian ancestry; by the turn of the century, *Cajuns/cadiens* are a group symbolically discrete. Their distinctiveness is greater in English than in French. If *cadien* retains the graphic mark of the Acadian origin, the spelling of *Cajun* does not convey it at all; in fact, it follows the pattern employed to coin *Injun*, the spelling used by American writers to convey scorn and disdain of American Indians. Indeed, Cajuns are constructed as a breed apart.

The symbolic distinction of Cajuns reflected their new position in the social structure of postbellum Louisiana. Recent scholarship has exposed the mechanism that resulted in the stratification of nineteenth-century Acadian society. Historians have identified several factors that led to the breakup of a culturally homogeneous community into different classes: settlement in natural environments as diverse as *levée* lands, swamps, prairie and coastline marshes; the adoption of slavery and the plantation system by second- and third-generation Acadians; unequal access to land and capital; intermarriage with higher-class Creoles or endogamy; failure of the state and the Catholic church to provide educational opportunities in French; cooptation of the Acadian elite by the Anglo-American system; and refusal by Cajuns to "make the necessary compromises and concessions to Anglo-American ways."³⁶ The devastation brought on by the Civil War and the crises of Reconstruction resulted in a greater polarization. Brasseaux noted:

Before the Civil War, the Acadians constituted a highly stratified and diversified socioeconomic group. The community contained planters, prosperous small slaveholding farmers, ranchers, urban professionals, rural artisans, independent yeomen, and landless day laborers. In the postbellum

period, however, Acadian agriculturalists divided into two basic groups: a small upper and upper-middle class that was largely co-opted by the region's dominant's Anglo-American culture, and the impoverished, poorly educated, but culturally steadfast masses.³⁷

The Acadian upper-class remained *Acadian/acadienne*, and the lower class became *Cajun/cadienne*. According to Dormon, the process of exclusion that resulted in the distinction between "lowly 'Cajun' and Lordly 'Genteel Acadian'" was achieved by 1865; Brasseaux estimates that the transition from "Acadian to Cajun" was completed by 1877. Objective differences in social class were symbolized by different labels. The systematic use and ascribed meaning of *Cajun/cadien* concur with the timeline and analysis proposed by historians.

The use of both terms by nineteenth-century writers is exemplary. Davis drew a distinction between the good "Acadian" and the "wretched Cajans." *Acadian* is used when positive qualities are mentioned, and *Cajun* is associated with condemnable behaviors:

"I am Acadian myself on my mother's side. Oh I know my people!"

"I heard much of them at New Orleans."

"Then," hastily, "I am glad to have met you to correct your false impressions of the lazy, wretched 'Cajans'!"

"They do not seem to be a progressive people," ventured Mr. Ely.

"No, perhaps not. But is progress everything? They are not lazy. The men work faithfully—when they work at all. . . . It is true that they are separate from the world in that they have no schools, no books, no newspapers [. . .] The Acadian is a moral, sober, honorable man. He is fond of his wife and children."³⁸

A similar use is made of the terms by Louisiana novelists; in his Acadian trilogy, *Bonaventure*, Cable exclusively referred to Acadian people, history and language as *Acadian* and reserved the use of *Cajun* to low-class characters, a black and a laborer whose discourses are noted in phonetic vernacular. In her writings, Chopin used mostly *'Cadian* but had a black servant use *Cajun* to describe "a gentleman of the Bayou Têche."³⁹

This pattern organized the usage of both terms in French and English until recently. Little oral and written data were found on the use of *cadien* by the people so labeled at the turn and first decades of the twentieth century. However, written evidence by outsiders provides some indications. The use of *cadien* during this period was very limited. One

reason was that French-language print had all but disappeared, insuring the supremacy of English; besides historical works, there are a handful of travel accounts by French and Canadian scholars in which Louisiana Acadians are referred to as *acadiens*.⁴⁰ In his memoir on a trip to Louisiana, Robert made a rare mention of *cadien*:

Un chauffeur d'auto à qui je demande s'il parle le français répond: Non, je parle le cadien. Et comme la conversation se continue, il se rend compte tout à coup qu'après tout, il n'y a qu'une grammaire française et un dictionnaire français.

*I ask the driver if he speaks French; he responds: No I speak Cajun. And as the conversation goes on, he suddenly realizes that after all there is but one French grammar and one French dictionary.*⁴¹

The use of *Cajun* is better documented. At the turn of the century, the term was either used as a derogative or is avoided. Until the 1960s there are no newspapers, literary publications, or Acadiana businesses using it.⁴² Scholars did not use *Cajun/cadien*; their writings refer to *Acadian/Acadien*, *French-speaking*, *Louisiana French* and *French*. When *Cajun* was used, it was accompanied with typographical and semantical precisions.⁴³

The use of *Cajun* by outsiders was notably different. In 1925, a record company labeled Louisiana French folk music *Cajan* whereas local terms included *French*, *Acadian* or *French Acadian*;⁴⁴ Cajun dialect and simple-mindedness were portrayed by humorists such as Walter Coquille, caricaturesque mayor of fictitious Bayou Pom Pom. Among writers, playwright Ava Jack Carver penned *The 'Cajun* in 1926—a dark affair of cousin marriage and broken hearts—⁴⁵ and a *National Geographic* contributor rubbed “elbows with the famous ‘Cajuns’” during his incursion among the trappers of Terrebonne Parish:

The language of the Cajun is a French patois, but occasionally he makes forays into the English tongue, and weird and fantastic are the results. Although a vast deal of fun is had at the expense of the Cajun, chiefly on account of his linguistic lapses, Louisiana has leaned heavily upon his stalwart shoulders and he endures the hardships of the trapper's life with admirable bonhomie.⁴⁶

Accompanied with transcriptions in vernacular Cajun English and photographs of Cajuns fishing and logging, these works contributed to

build the image of the rural, illiterate Cajun living on the edge of civilization; this excerpt by Daniels helped publicize the negative connotation of *Cajun*:

Terrebonne is another land in the same state. It lies across the instep of the boot of Louisiana from Feliciana. But this parish of the Good Earth has by no means been a land of riches. Sometimes even it must seem to its Cajun fur trappers, oysters tonguers, shrimp seiners and fishermen that *le bon Dieu* had forgotten them. And devout, even superstitious as they have remained, they have in some cases of poverty had to forego the expensive services of priests. . . . But such Cajuns, of course, [. . .] are not typical. But they are there and they have been desperately poor. But its fish and its fur as well as its fertility made it ripe for opening before Huey ran in his roads to take Cajun votes and produce out as well as carry new wealth in.⁴⁷

Gone are the explanations of the term and the typographical hints; symbolically, *Cajuns* are a group in their own right, disconnected from their Acadian heritage. While *Acadians* are lauded and studied, *Cajuns* are derided and stereotyped. Even attempts by fair-minded scholars to "clear up a maze of misunderstandings about the Cajuns" ended up reinforcing the cliché:

The term Creole has always been synonymous with excellence. . . . And Cajun was a fighting word. Here an old Negro mammy did not say "poor white trash." She said "Cajun"—or "blue bellied Cajun." When the old Creoles wished to designate some ignoramus in their midst with whom they were exasperated, they tacked on an adjective [. . .] "*maudit Cajin*." . . . As another educator, a man from *La Côte des Acadiens*, laughingly puts it, "Me, I am a Creole; the other fellow, he is a Cajun."⁴⁸

In her assessment of the representation of Cajuns in literature, Pecot acknowledged that some descendants of the Acadians have risen to become

some of the most distinguished citizens the state has produced. . . . But [such] personalities, although retaining some features particular to their countrymen, have, in the larger sense, succumbed to the dominating influences of American culture and have become hybrid by-products. . . . Not so the typical 'Cajun, who has been neither amalgamated nor assimilated by the Americans, but is today the same sturdy Breton peasant who fished and trapped and farmed over two hundred years ago in the environs of Nova Scotia.⁴⁹

By the 1950s, approximately a century after its emergence in writing, the usage of *Cajun/cadien* followed a clear pattern: the English orthography was the dominating norm, it had eclipsed *Acadian*, it was used derisively or stereotypically by outsiders, it was avoided or used carefully by insiders.

TOWARD POSITIVE ASCRIPTION

However, signs of evolution were appearing. On the one hand, the English term was applied to groups outside Louisiana. Publications revealed the existence of *Cajan* communities in Alabama, Mississippi and Texas, and accounts focused on miscegenation and poverty:

Cajans in the hilly areas of Washington, Mobile and Clarke Counties [Alabama] as well as adjoining parts of Mississippi . . . are a poor hill people of the wooded country who subsist by lumbering, turpentine extraction, and various odd jobs. . . . Cajans are a mixture of white, Indian and Negro types.⁵⁰

Though the distinctiveness with Louisiana Cajuns was noted, the common French heritage and similarity of the names leave “little doubt that at least some of their ancestors included members of the original migrants from Acadia or other early French settlers.”⁵¹

On the other hand, two derogative terms applied to Cajuns appeared presumably in the late 1940s: *coonass* and *bougalie*. Despite its rather clear denotation (a racoon’s behind), the etymology of *coonass* remains a matter of debate. Some argued that the term originated from the French word *conasse*, a feminine term indicating either a prostitute or a person doing stupid things; the term would have been used by French and American soldiers to address French-speaking Louisianian soldiers who would have brought the term back home after the war.⁵² Others believed that *coonass* was derived from the name given to Andrew Jackson’s Tennessee volunteers when they came to New Orleans wearing their coonskin caps.⁵³ Recently, Ancelet proposed that “it is not unlikely that *coonass* evolved simply as an expression of the doubly racist notions that Cajuns were even lower on the social scale than coons (a disparaging term for African Americans).” Whatever the disagreement on the origin, there was consensus on several points: the term is recent, used as a derogative by non-Cajuns, and by Cajuns as “a term of endearment much in the same way that African Americans have used the word ‘nigger’ among themselves to try to disarm that hurtful word.”⁵⁴

In the 1970s, the use of the term came under scrutiny. Edwin Edwards, the self-proclaimed Cajun Governor, was chastised for using the term liberally. In 1977, a Cajun employee filed suit against his employer who had fired him because he objected to the use of the derogatory term *coonass*; the case was settled out of court in favor of the employee.⁵⁵ Amidst extensive media coverage, and prompted by Cajun activists, the Louisiana legislature condemned the use of the slur and forbid the sale of items displaying it. Despite these developments, met by reactions ranging from support to derision,⁵⁶ *coonass* remains used among Cajuns, primarily by "young working-class males of Cajun extraction who [. . .] see the term as a kind of macho assertion of their earthy, pungent masculinity."⁵⁷

Another derogative term addressed to Cajuns was *boogerlee/bougalee* [’bug li]. Also spelled *boogalee* and *bougalee*, it referred to a French person of mixed black and white ancestry; "a contemptuous or taunting name for a lower-class Cajun,"⁵⁸ it was considered a synonym of *Cajun* and *coonass*. Scant data indicate a limited use, confined to the New Orleans area.

Discussion of racial purity of *coonasses*, *boogerlees* and out-of-state *Cajans* represented a relative improvement of the prestige of *Cajun*: after all, descendants of the Acadian exiles in Louisiana could be called names more pejorative than *Cajun*. In a shift similar to the turn-of-the-century split between *Acadian* and *Cajun*, *Cajun* came to embody positive qualities that other derivatives were described as lacking; in 1966, an editorialist proposed to name the fledgling football team in New Orleans the *Louisiana Cajuns*:

Pro gridders should have a name that denotes courage, valor, stamina, boldness and daring—in short all the virtues that are inbred in the manly Cajuns of Louisiana.⁵⁹

Even though the NFL franchise was to become the New Orleans Saints, the endeavor symbolized a drastic evolution in the use and meaning of the word: *Cajun* no longer carried the stigma with which it had been associated. Again, writers for the popular press reflected this evolution. Reporting for *National Geographic*, Keating wrote:

The estimated quarter of a million French-speaking dwellers of the Louisiana coastal marsh do not accept strangers easily. Louisiana Frenchmen show an un-Gallic reserve, possibly because their English-speaking neighbors have often misunderstood them.

For instance, before I began my latest tour of Acadiana, I chatted with an Anglo-Saxon state official who expressed alarm at my free use of the word "Cajun."

"Don't let them hear you call them Cajuns," he said. "It's a dirty word to them."

Like most of his Anglo-Saxon neighbors, the nervous official has managed to spend his life among the French-speakers of southern Louisiana without once noticing that Cajuns is precisely what they call themselves.⁶⁰

Positive ascription by outsiders was mirrored by an increasingly positive self-image. Table 3 documents the appearance of *Cajun* in the Lafayette telephone directory and its ever-increasing use by businesses in the heart of Cajun country. By the mid-sixties, the use of Cajun was acceptable to both insiders and outsiders.

The factors of this shift are found in Louisiana's changing social structure. The postbellum Acadian/Cajun split had left *Cajun* with a negative ascription, the rapid acculturation of Cajuns to the American way of life resulted in positive ascription and self-image. As Cajuns became more American, *Cajun* became more acceptable. The Americanization of Cajuns was itself the result of changes in the American society. Of these, mechanization, industrialization and urbanization had the strongest effect on the rural Louisiana population, and especially on Cajuns. The integration of Cajuns to the American culture was evident in the decreasing use of the French language, the decline of agricultural occupations and the rise of industry and service jobs, the encroachment of Protestantism, the adoption of American consumer habits from foodways to entertainment. The growing homogenization of Louisiana cultural landscape seemingly made the distinction between Cajuns and others less pertinent. Nevertheless, the visibility of Cajuns increased dramatically; the less objective the difference, the more symbolic it became. This development was reflected in the use of *Cajun/cadien*.

First, *Cajun* and *Acadian* were once again used as synonyms. The distinction that separated *Cajuns* from *Acadians* at the beginning of the century had weakened. The reversal of ascription was extended to the etymology of the term: long characterized a "corrupted term," *Cajun/cadien* had become a "natural and legitimate linguistic derivative." A Louisiana Senate Resolution provided a definition of "Acadians (Cajuns)":

Louisianians originating from the province of Acadia in Canada were named and identified as Acadians and likewise as Cajuns since the word Cajun is a natural and legitimate linguistic derivative of the word Acadian in the English language.⁶¹

TABLE 3
Listings Using Ethnic Code Words in the Lafayette Telephone Directory (1905–1995)

	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1912	1914	1928	1941	1944	1946	1951	1956	1961	1962	1963
Evangeline	o	1	1	1	1	o	o	3 (a)	6	8	8	11	12	18	19	18
Acadian								1	3	2	2	3	3	9	10	7
Acadia								10 (b)								
Acadiana											1					1
Cajun																
Creole										1 (c)	1					
	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Evangeline	16	18	20	16	17	20	21	20	24	25	25	26	25	26	27	28
Acadian	8	10	14	16	21	23	24	28	29	36	37	39	38	42	42	46
Acadia	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	5
Acadiana	1	3	4	3	6	10	16	23	30	36	42	45	58	68	77	85
Cajun	1	1	2	1	3	3	2	8	13	11	10	11	8	7	12	13
Creole															1	1
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	
Evangeline	26	28	27	28	26	23	20	23	21	21	19	20	19	19	20	
Acadian	52	54	60	53	54	49	48	43	54	52	55	50	54	59	48	
Acadia	9	9	11	11	12	13	8	8	7	8	7	6	6	6	6	
Acadiana	120	141	144	152	144	155	142	147	157	153	151	165	172	175	182	
Cajun	24	21	34	37	41	36	32	41	46	40	41	42	46	50	50	
Creole	4	6	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	6	5	5	4	4	

Notes: Listings starting with the mentioned ethnic code words were counted in the commercial telephone directories covering the Lafayette area. Variations are noted in the area covered (starting in 1949, listings outside of Lafayette are omitted) and the organization of listings (businesses are listed separately starting in 1984). o : no recorded use of any term; | : indicates a break in time sequence; (a) : in Saint Martinville only; (b) : in Rayne and Crowley only; (c) : *Calais Creole Café* in Breaux Bridge

Source: Adapted from Barry Ancelet, "From Evangeline hot sauce to cajun ice: Signs of ethnicity in South Louisiana," paper delivered at the meeting of the American Folklore Society, 1996.

A typical example of the joint use of both terms is found at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Located in Lafayette, the heart of *Acadiana*, the “*Université des Acadiens*” has a “*Ragin’ Cajun*” mascot that supports teams playing at *Cajun Field* or in the *Cajundome*.

Second, *Cajun* experienced a dramatic increase in usage both by insiders and outsiders. It is a consequence of the movement of ethnic renewal that developed in the late 1970s following the creation of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL), a state agency with the mission to promote Louisiana’s French culture. The ensuing French Movement, as it was dubbed, is widely credited for promoting ethnic awareness among Cajuns. In addition to its increased use in the Lafayette area, *Cajun* became a statewide brand name utilized in areas where Acadians had not settled and no Cajuns lived; a computer search of businesses in contract with the State of Louisiana yielded fifty-six hits in 1987 and seventy-five in 1994.⁶² Now “hot,” *Cajun* was reportedly helping sales and promotion not only in Louisiana but nationwide. Indeed, *Cajun* became associated with a great variety of products, items, and techniques; so, in French and Anglo Louisiana alike, there appeared “Cajun popcorn,” “Cajun Computers,” “Cajun Police Supply,” “Cajun Beauties” and a whole range of culinary products, such as “Cajun Pizza,” “Cajun Whaler,” and many “Cajun” hot sauces. The popularity of Louisiana’s French culture also led to a 300 percent increase in the use of ethnic identity markers based on *Acadia* between 1975 and 1995; the most used term is now *Acadiana*, a combination of *Acadia* and Louisiana, coined in 1964 and adopted as the official name of the southwest area of the state in 1971 (see Table 3). Alternate, stylized spellings have also appeared: *Kajun* (in the name of several businesses in Southwest Louisiana), *Kajon* (a convenience store in Baton Rouge with a *fleur de lys* in the o), *KAJUN* (a radio station in Baton Rouge whose logo was adorned by an alligator and cowboy boots), *KAJN* (a radio station in Abbeville), *KJIN* (a radio station in Houma).

THE MOVE FOR SELF-DEFINITION

In parallel, the French term also experienced changes in context, form and frequency of use. In 1978, a debate within the French community was engaged on the spelling of *Cajun/cadien/cadjin*. The English spelling was normalized, but the French spelling was not. Cajuns writing in French and/or English had no clear guidelines to follow; some used the

abbreviated term while others declared *Nous Sommes Acadiens/We Are Acadians* because, as Arceneaux wrote,

It is therefore proper to insist on the word Acadian in its ancestral accuracy as opposed to the meaningless unorthographic corruption Cajun which obscures the literary association and historical significance of the name.⁶³

Prompted by necessity, the editors of the newsletter published by CODOFIL asked their readers to choose between "Cajun or Cadjin" to designate Louisiana Cajuns. A handful of responses proposed *Cadjin*, *Cajun*, *'cadien*, *Cadien*, *Cajin*, *Acadien* and *coonass*. A repeated attempt in 1980 yielded some forty comments but also failed to gather a consensus; commented a disappointed editor:

le mot "Acadien" vient largement en tête, avec troisième supporters. Cajun vient en deuxième place, mais loin derrière: sept votes. Ensuite viennent Cadien et Cajin avec cinq voix chacun; Français-Acadien, Acadien-Louisianais, Acadien-Franco-Américain et Franco-Américain-Acadien, un chacun.

De plus, deux petits comiques, ou deux inconscients, ont suggéré "coonass," bien que cette possibilité n'était pas prévue.

the word "Acadien" is clearly ahead with thirteen supporters. Cajun places a distant second with seven votes. Then come Cadien and Cajin with five votes each; Français-Acadien, Acadien-Louisianais, Acadien-Franco-América in et Franco-Américain-Acadien, one each.

*In addition, two comics or two ignorants suggested "coonass" which was not even offered as a choice.*⁶⁴

A decade elapsed before another attempt at formalization was made. It developed in a different context. The publication of texts in Cajun French and debates on the type of French to teach had occupied cultural activists for the better part of the decade; there was a greater awareness of the difficulties in defining and writing the various brands of Louisiana French. The popularity of *Cajun* and the persisting demand for a French name contributed to create a sense of urgency; "if we do not choose a 'standard' name, somebody else is going to do it for us," wrote one Cajun activist.⁶⁵ Normalization was due. Ultimately, a group of Louisiana writers gathered under the auspices of CODOFIL and organized a committee to standardize written Louisiana French.

The first order of business was the coining of a French name. The exclusion of *Cajun* was unanimous because it reflected the English pronunciation. Two positions emerged. One favored *cadjin* because it was unique to Louisiana, adequately noted the pronunciation, especially the [dj], and gave the morphologically correct feminine *cadjine*; the other opted for *cadien* because it clearly established Acadian ancestry, had been used to designate Acadian settlements outside ancestral Acadie and accounted for the difference between oral and written communication.

Of course, the debate involved issues larger than the correct spelling of a word, no matter how symbolic, or the novel interpretation of old definitions; the issue was of boundary maintenance or rather construction. Some called for a French Louisiana reaction to cultural imperialism; Guidry urged CODOFIL to put an end to the linguistic exploitation of “Cadiens” and to promote the traditional orthography “‘Cadien’ to name us.” Ancelet concurred: (1) “It’s a colonialist crime to impose on us a spelling which reflects pronunciation . . . (2) If we begin to change the orthography to reflect all the different accents in Louisiana, we risk alienating the French spoken in Louisiana, driving it back further into its corner. We have . . . to establish a means of communication between us and the rest of the French-speaking world.”⁶⁶

On the other side, Marcantel argued for *cadjin* because its unique spelling objectified the ethnic diversity of Cajuns and de-emphasized the Acadian connection; *cadjin* is not a synonym of *acadien* because

Pour être cadjin, on n’est pas obligé de faire des recherches généalogiques. . . . Si on accepte volontier (et je pense que c’est généralement admis) que la musique cadjine et la cuisine cadjine résultent d’un mélange d’influences espagnoles, africaines, américaines, acadiennes, françaises, allemandes, etc. pourquoi est-il difficile à admettre que le peuple cadjin est un mélange de ces mêmes cultures?

To be Cajun, one does not need to trace its genealogy. . . . If it is agreed (as I think it widely is) that Cajun music and Cajun cuisine are the result of Spanish, African, American, Acadian, French, German and other influences, why is it so hard to admit that the Cajun people is a combination of these same cultures?

In the end, the committee recommended the spelling *cadien* and recognized the variant *cadjin*, in line with the guidelines adopted for the

writing of Louisiana French.⁶⁷ Recent observations suggest that *cadien* may emerge as the leading spelling among French-speaking and French-writing Cajuns; it is used by organizations (*Renaissance Cadienne*, *Action Cadienne*, *Association des Etudiants Cadiens*), Louisiana authors and French-language publications.⁶⁸

These developments are clearly linked to the recent evolution of Cajun ethnicity. Once a marker used by outsiders to delineate a social difference and exclude a group, the label is now controlled by Cajun to denote a cultural difference from the inside. This control was achieved mostly by manipulations of symbols, including a group name but also the adoption of a flag in 1969 and a name for the geographical area. First, the context of reference in which Cajunness is defined has been changed; it is not limited any longer to the American society and culture. The inadequacy of an official frame of reference, defined by outsiders, is expressed in this excerpt of a play performed by the *Théâtre 'Cadien*:

"Elle a dit: "Est-ce que vous êtes Américain?" "ben non," j'y ai dit. "Les Américains, ça reste au Nord des Avoyelles, pis dans les aut' états, pas par icitte." "Est-ce que vous êtes noir?" J'ai dit, "Non." "Chinois?" "Non." "Mexicain?" "Non." "Puerto Ricain?" "Non." "Amérindien?" "Non." J'ai dit, "Non, j'ai jamais attendu parler de cette qualité de monde-là." "Bien," a dit, "c'est la fin de la liste. Alors vous n'êtes pas une minorité reconnue!" J'ai dit, "Madame, ti veut dire que tous les Cadjins se ressemblent?" A dit, "Non, je veux dire que vous n'êtes pas une minorité. Que diable êtes-vous alors? J'ai dit, "Madame, à Bayou St-Pierre, tout le monde est Cadjin, Acadien." A dit, "Non, pas possible. Ce n'est pas sur la liste. Le gouvernement fédéral à Washington n'a jamais entendu

"She said: Are you American?" "Well no," I said. "The Americans live north of Avoyelles, and in the other states, but not around here." "Are you Black?" I said, "No." "Chinese?" "No." "Mexican?" "No." "Puerto Rican?" "No." "Amerindian?" "No." I said "No, I never heard of this kind of people." "Well," she said, "that's the end of the list. Then you are not an official minority!" I said, "Miss, do you mean to say that all Cajuns look alike?" She said, "No, I just mean that you are not a minority. What the hell are you?" I said, "Madam, in Bayou Saint Pierre, everybody is Cajun, Acadian." She said, "No, that's not possible. This is not on the list. The federal government in Washington, D.C. has never heard about you."

Think about it. We have been here in Louisiana for over two

parler de vous.” Pensez-donc. On est icitte en Louisiane depuis au-dessus de deux siècles et y’z’ont jamais attendu parler de nous-aut.’ Le gouvernement envouaye le C.I.A. tout partout dans le monde pour sa’oir quoi-ce qui se passe, mais y’z’ont jamais fouillé à Bayou St-Pierre pour nous découvrir.

A dit, “Est-ce que vous parlez une langue étrangère?” J’ai dit, “Ouais, l’amaricain.” “Est-ce que vous êtes en Améri-que depuis longtemps?” “Ouais, on est en Louisiane depuis au-dessus de deux sièc’, mais on est en Amarique depuis plus de 370 ans. On était en Amar-ique avant les Américains.” (...) “Alors,” a dit, “il n’y a plus de question. Je sais maintenant exactement ce que vous êtes. Vous êtes des sauvages!” J’ai dit, “Ouais, ma-dame, asteur je connais exacte-ment ça que t’es toi itou. T’es eine couillonne!”

centuries and they never heard about us. The government sends the CIA all over the world to find out what’s going on, but they never looked in Bayou Saint Pierre to find us.

She said, “Do you speak a foreign language?” I said, “Yeah, American.” “How long have you been in America?” “Well, we’ve been in Louisiana for over two centuries but we’ve been in America for over 370 years. We were in America before the Americans” (...) “Then,” she said, “no more doubt. I know who exactly what you are. You are Savages!” I said, “Yeah, madam, now I know exactly what you are. You’re a jerk!”⁶⁹

The new referential venue is now *la francophonie*, the French-speaking world. The rejection of *Cajun* and the adoption of a French term is necessary not only for French Louisiana but the positioning of Cajuns within the French-speaking world. Like the emergence of *Cajun* symbolized the advent of an American ethnic group, the emergence of *cadien* symbolizes the inclusion of Cajuns in the *francophonie*. From this perspective, after more than two centuries in Louisiana, the descendants of the Acadian exiles are no *longer français, acadiens* or *créoles* and even less *Cajuns*: they are *cadiens*; as Daigle put it:

the words Cajun and Acadian do not have the same meaning. The word Cajun applies only to those whose Acadian ancestors came to Louisiana after the eviction of 1755, whereas the broader term Acadian applies to all

the descendants of the original Acadians, regardless of where they now live. Thus, all Cajuns are Acadians but not all Acadians are Cajuns.⁷⁰

The distinction is not only symbolic, it is found in social practice. The debate on the type of French to teach in Louisiana classrooms highlighted the difference between standard French and French-based languages found in the state. The criticism by Cajun activists of the academic French bend of the initial CODOFIL endeavors focused on the specificity and variety of Cajun culture. From this emerging Louisiana francophone perspective, *Cadien* now labels a discrete group.

Second, the control now asserted by Cajuns on their self-conception is marked by inclusiveness. Linguists have already pointed to a linguistic "continuum"⁷¹ and interrelations between French, Cajun, Creole and English, a unique characteristic. The acceptance and integration of the numerous cultural influences that shaped today's Cajunness is articulated in this definition of Cajuns by Reed, author of the first book published in Cajun French:

Alors pour moi, un vrai Cajun est une personne qui reste dans le sud-ouest de la Louisiane ou Est-Texas, et qui a demeuré avec les Français, les Allemands, les Anglais, les Espagnols, les Italiens, les Indiens et les Noirs; et depuis 1804, avec les Américains; mais qui a gardé la langue française-acadienne, qui a préservé la culture acadienne pour 200 ans et qui a toujours été fier de son héritage. (...) S'il a accepté la langue française, l'a apprise, l'aime, et la parle le mieux qu'il peut, ça, c'est un vrai Cajun! S'il a accepté la culture, les traditions, et la musique des Cajuns, il est un Cajun; et s'il garde son héritage acadien malgré tout les grands changements depuis le "grand dérangement" des Acadiens en 1755, il est un Cajun. Il est peut-être un pauvre

Then for me, a real Cajun is a person who lives in Southwest Louisiana or East Texas, and who has lived with the French, Germans, English, Spanish, Italians, Indians and Blacks; and since 1804, with the Americans; but who has kept the French-Acadian language, who has preserved Acadian culture for 200 years and who has always been proud of its heritage. (...) If he has accepted the French language, learned it, loves it and speaks to the best of his ability, he is a real Cajun; and if he has kept his Acadian heritage despite all the changes since the "great displacement" of Acadians in 1755, he is a Cajun. He may be poor or rich, Catholic or Baptist, educated or not; but if he speaks Cajun, loves Cajun music, kept the old ways, then he

ou un riche, un catholique ou un Baptiste, bien informé dans l'éducation ou pas du tout; mais s'il parle cajun, aime la musique cajune, garde les vieilles manières de vivre, lui aussi devrait être qualifié comme un Cajun. Finalement, un Cajun est un Cajun, qu'il demeure dans le sud-ouest de la Louisiane ou Los Angeles, Houston ou les pays étrangers. Ça c'est ça le Cajun qui croit qu'il est un Cajun."

*should be called a Cajun. In the end, A Cajun is a Cajun, whether he lives in southwest Louisiana, Los Angeles, Houston or abroad. A Cajun is one if he believes he is a Cajun.*⁷²

In line with Barth's view of ethnic identity, this statement also embodies in its form the inclusiveness of its content; it displays the use of the English noun (*Cajun*) in a French text with the morphological adjustments of capitalization (*cajun* as adjective and *Cajun* as noun) and gender (the feminine *cajune*) as well as the various synonyms (*acadien*, *francaise-acadienne*).

Positive, defined from within and inclusive, Cajun ethnicity remains challenged whether in French, as exemplified by the *cadien/cadjin* debate, or in English, from the inside and the outside, or rather from the various perspectives Cajun ethnicity may be viewed.

Cajun had been problematic when used as a derogatory term to characterize the lowest class of the illiterate, poor and altogether non-Americanized descendants of Acadian exiles. By the 1980s, the term was destigmatized, positively charged and used liberally by Cajuns and non-Cajuns alike. Interestingly, it remains problematic. Regardless of its connotation, the term still symbolizes differences. As the all-encompassing symbol of Cajunness, *Cajun/cadien* became a contested battleground.

The commercial exploitation of *Cajun* did not sit well with cultural activists, who objected to the construction of a stereotype and complained of being "Cajuned-out." Renowned Cajun musician Dewey Balfa commented: "Cajun is being so commercialized. Not just Cajun music. Cajun everything. Someday it's going to be too much"; the same view "once prompted musician, instrument maker and local sage Marc Savoy to answer a reporter's question, 'Are you sorry the Cajuns have been discovered?' with 'I'm sorrier the Cajuns have discovered themselves.'"⁷³

The "Cajunization of Louisiana" also prompted outsiders to react.

Louisiana merchants worried. A state marketing official commented: "Our problem is that Cajun is very, very popular right now. . . . What we're trying to solve is the fake Cajun problem." Reports of "Cajun" products marketed by companies in Illinois, New Jersey or Tennessee prompted Louisiana officials and food producers to take action. The legislature authorized the adoption of a logo for Louisiana products and the Commissioner of Agriculture threatened to sue producers of "out-of-state, bad-tasting, red-pepperhot, copy-cat Cajun food."⁷⁴ The logo currently in use reads "Product of Louisiana Certified *Cajun*."

In New Orleans, the liberal use of the *Cajun* label was also contested because of its inadequacy. As the economic benefits of Cajunization could be seen and taunted throughout the French Quarter, a columnist wrote:

What those visitors probably don't know is that New Orleans isn't a Cajun town, and never was. Creole, yes; Cajun, no. But the city, curiously, has become the center of the Cajun revival [initiated by Chef] Paul Prudhomme. Prudhomme's food is not the Cajun food that settlers of yore used to eat. . . . [The French] Quarter, a place that played a role in the development of Cajun culture at two stages—the very beginning when the original Acadians arrived at the port of New Orleans; and the Prudhomme revival.⁷⁵

In a study of the cultural diversity of French Louisiana, geographer Cécyle Trépanier proposed that the designation of twenty-two parishes in the southwest region as *Acadiana*, and the adoption of the *Louisiana Acadian* flag

made awkward the place of Italian, Spanish, Scots-Irish 'Cajuns' by referring to an old Acadian identity, and definitely prevented blacks and Indians of French culture from being Cajuns.⁷⁶

Indeed black legislators responded vigorously when a Cajun legislator attempted to include "French Acadians" among officially recognized minorities. Such a distinction would have extended to Cajuns the benefits of set-aside programs and other economic advantages provided to minorities. Black legislators labeled the bill "facetious" and "ludicrous"; it was widely described as an attempt to water down affirmative action, and it was ultimately vetoed by the governor.⁷⁷

Also, an "Afrikan-American" activist has been waging a campaign to protest the inclusion of Louisiana blacks under the label *Cajun*. J.J.

Harmon protested the naming of the University of Southwestern Louisiana athletic teams as *Ragin' Cajuns*:

Southwest Louisiana is pluralistic in every sense of the word with Acadians, Afrikans (30%), French, Germans, Puerto Ricans, Spanish, etc. who together made and make the area what it is. How dare the Cajuns co-opt, usurp and suck all of the honey!⁷⁸

The issue generated a campus debate. One participant noted that "Cajun" and "nigger" were both racial slurs in the past and that the "cleaning-up" of Cajun could not totally erase the connotation. Other participants remarked:

If this university became home of the Ragin' Niggers, how many white students would attend this university? How many of you would go and cheer the Ragin' Niggers? This is not a mascot issue . . . This is not anti-Cajun. This is un-Cajun. It simply means that we are not Cajun.⁷⁹

The name issue is symbolic of a wider movement that contributed both to reassert the racial difference between whites and blacks and reinforce the French-based identity of Louisiana's black French-speakers. The 1980s have seen the development of actions by Creoles to assert both their race and culture. An association, C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc., was formed in 1987 to promote Louisiana Creole culture through student exchanges, cultural activities such as zydeco dances and discussions of *créolité*; magazines are published (*Creole Magazine* in 1990, *Creole Experience* in 1995); and zydeco, the accordion-based folk music of Creoles, has gained significant popularity with festivals, radio programs and *Grammy*'s awarded to Creole musicians.

Used by outsiders as a derogative, the use of *Cajun/cadien* had long been contested by Cajuns. The situation is now reversed: confronted with the liberal use of the term, outsiders tend to reject the use of the now inclusive term. The cultural content of Cajunness also changed considerably in the past hundred years. What has not changed are the cultural markers of difference: race, Acadian origin, French language, religion, the maintenance of particular folkways and a Cajun ethos stereotyped by the much-used formula *Laissez les bons temps rouler* (Let the good times roll).

CONCLUSION

The definition of Cajun ethnicity has been on-going since the arrival of Acadian exiles in Louisiana. It has taken place amidst the economic, social and cultural changes that have happened since the eighteenth century. The names used to designate the descendants of Acadian exiles have espoused this evolution. In this sense, the evolution of *Cajun/cadien* symbolizes the processual definition of Cajun ethnicity.

The analysis of the written occurrences of *Cajun/cadien* shows that the term originated in early Acadian speech and that it was codified and popularized in English in the 1880s. The negative connotation emerged from the Louisiana Acadian community when it split between an Acadian upper-class and a Cajun lower class. There again, the negative ascription of *Cajun* spread in English through mostly English-language media. With the integration of Cajuns to American culture, the term *Cajun* took on a positive connotation in the 1960s; the subsequent French renaissance movement resulted in an increased and sometimes contested use of *Cajun* and the codifying of *cadien* by Cajun activists.

The manipulation of these symbols of Cajun ethnicity is framed by the interaction of outsiders and insiders. The assignment of a name, the ascription of qualities, the rejection of a name are indicators of the boundaries between the Acadians and the groups with whom they came in contact. These boundaries shift with the historical context, social change and perspective. The analysis of the use of *Cajun/cadien* shows how Cajun ethnicity is less a matter of cultural content than a dialectical process. Cajuns have been defined by what they were not rather than by what they were.

Further analysis of the symbolic characteristics ascribed to those called *Cajun/cadien* will show that cultural traits are used to construct, not describe, the "otherness." In the past this process has been mostly controlled by outsiders, from Longfellow's *Evangeline* to portrayals by novelists and journalists. Recently, insiders have been increasingly involved. This analysis will lead to a reassessment of Barth's view of ethnicity and more recent theories of symbolic ethnicity by focusing on the interrelations between historic-cultural differences, their symbolic representations and Louisiana's social structure.

NOTES

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2. Larbi Oukada, "The Territory and Population of French-Speaking Louisiana," *Revue de Louisiane/Louisiana Review*, 7:1 (Summer, 1978): 5–34; and Robert Gramling, Craig Forsyth & Linda Mooney, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Cajunism," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 15(1986): 33–46.

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13. Arsenault, *Histoire* pp.266–7.

14. Archivo General de Indias, Papeles procedentes de Cuba, legajo 188C, folios 62–63, Seville, Spain. I am indebted to Barry Ancelet and Carl Brasseaux for providing this information.

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66. Quoted in (1) *La Gazette de Louisiane*, vol.3, 8(Mars 1991): 6 and (2) in Becky Brown, "The Social Consequences of Writing Louisiana French," *Language in Society*, 22(1993): 67–101. Material in this section comes from correspondence (on file) in 1991 with Barry Ancelet, Richard Guidry and David Marcantel; Barry Ancelet, "A Perspective on Teaching the 'Problem language' in Louisiana," *The French Review*, 61:3(1988): 345–56; and *La Gazette de Louisiane*, vol.3, 4(November 1990), 7(February 1991), vol.4, 1(August-September 1993), 8(January-February 1995).

67. Interestingly, an anonymous writer using the name Ain Cadjein stayed out of the debate despite his interest and work in transcribing Louisiana French. Since 1975, he has been mailing to local radio stations handwritten then typed Cajun French translations of classical literary works; using a quasi-phonetic system and shunning conventional "Parisian" orthography as much as possible, he used *Cajun* when writing in English and *Cadjein* (feminine *cadjène*) when using French.

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racism involved in this protest [since] the word Cajun has in fact long been considered an ethnic slur by some members of the African-American community" ("Ragin Cajuns: What's in a Name?" non-dated paper, on file); on this, see St. Martin "Cajuns."